

APPENDIX C

RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

Introduction

The goal of the recreationist is to have satisfying leisure experiences by participating in preferred activities in favorable environmental settings. Opportunities for achieving satisfying experiences depend on natural elements such as vegetation, landscape and scenery, and conditions controlled by land management agencies, such as developed sites, roads, and regulations. The goal of the recreation resource manager then becomes to provide the opportunities to obtain such experiences by managing the natural setting and the activities within it.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is the BLM's framework to inventory, plan, and manage recreational opportunities. The ROS is divided into six classes, ranging from essentially natural, low-use areas (resource-dependent recreational opportunities) to highly developed, intensive use areas (facility/vehicle-dependent recreational opportunities). Each class is defined in terms of three principal components: the environmental setting, the activities possible, and the experiences that can be achieved.

The primary factor in determining ROS classes is the setting. This describes the overall outdoor environment in which activities occur, influences the types of activities, and ultimately determines the types of recreation that can be achieved.

Activities are not completely dependent on opportunity class, and most can take place in some form throughout the spectrum. However, general activities can be characterized for each ROS class. For each person, her/his recreational experience depends on the environmental setting and individual differences based on background, education, sex, age, and place of residence.

Recreation Opportunity Settings

The ROS encompasses a variety of recreational settings under which certain experiences are possible. Seven elements provide the basis to inventory and

delineate recreational settings. These are: access, remoteness, naturalness, facility and site management, visitor management, social encounters, and visitor impacts.

Access—Includes the mode of travel used within the area and influences both the level and type of recreational use an area receives.

Remoteness—Concerns the extent to which individuals perceive themselves removed from human activity. Vegetation or topographic variation can increase this sense of remoteness. Lack of remoteness is important for some recreational experiences.

Naturalness—Concerns the varying degrees of human modification of the environment. Often described in terms of scenic quality influenced by the degree of alteration of the natural landscape.

Site Management—Refers to the level of site development. Lack of site modifications can facilitate feelings of self-reliance and naturalness, while highly developed facilities can enhance comfort and increase the opportunity to meet and interact with others.

Visitor Management—Includes both regulation and control of visitors as well as providing them with information and services. A continuum of visitor management can be described, ranging from subtle techniques such as site design, to strict rules and regulations. In some recreational settings controls are expected and appropriate; in others, on-site controls detract from the desired experience.

Social Encounters—Involves the number and type of others met in the recreation area. Also measures the extent to which an area provides experiences for solitude or social interaction.

Visitor Impacts—Affects natural resources such as soil, vegetation, air, water, and wildlife. Even low levels of use can produce significant ecological impacts, and these impacts can influence the visitor's experience.

Recreation Opportunity Classes

Based on the seven elements described above, six recreation opportunity classes have been developed and are described below. Reclassification of lands can occur in response to alternative management prescriptions.

Primitive

This setting is characterized by a large-sized area of about 5,000 acres or more, lying at least 3 miles from the nearest point of motor vehicle access. It is essentially an unmodified natural landscape, with little evidence of others and almost no on-site management controls. Activities include overnight backpack camping, nature study and photography, back country hunting, horseback riding, and hiking. The experience provides visitors with a chance to achieve solitude and isolation from human civilization, feel close to nature, and encounter a greater degree of personal risk and challenge.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

This setting consists of about 2,500 acres lying at least ½ mile from the nearest point of motor vehicle access. The area is predominantly a natural landscape. Where there is evidence of others, interaction is low, and few management controls exist. Activities include backpack camping, nature viewing, back country hunting (big game, small game, and upland birds), climbing, hiking, and cross-county skiing. The experience provides for minimal contact with others, a high degree of interaction with nature, and a great deal of personal risk and challenge.

Semi-Primitive Motorized

This setting consists of about 2,500 acres within ½ mile of primitive roads and two-track vehicle trails. The area has a mostly natural landscape with some evidence of others (but numbers and frequency of contact seem to remain low) and few management controls. Activities include hunting, climbing, vehicle trail riding, back country driving, mountain biking, hiking, and snowmobiling. The experience provides for isolation from human civilization, a high degree of interaction with the natural environment, and a moderate degree of personal risk and challenge.

Roaded Natural

This setting consists of areas near improved and maintained roads. While these areas are mostly natural in appearance, some human modifications are evident, with moderate numbers of people, visible management controls, and developments. Activities include wood gathering, downhill skiing, fishing, off-highway vehicle driving, interpretive uses, picnicking, and vehicle camping. The experience provides for a sense of security through the moderate number of visitors and developments, but with some personal risk-taking and challenges.

Rural

This setting is characterized by a substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification, development, and use are obvious. Human presence is readily evident, and interaction between users is often moderate to high. Activities consist mostly of facility/vehicle-dependent recreation and generally include vehicle sightseeing, horseback riding, on-road biking, golf, swimming, picnicking, and outdoor games. The experience provides for modern visitor conveniences, moderate to high levels of interactions with others, and a feeling of security from personal risk.

Urban

This setting consists of areas near paved highways, where the natural landscape is dominated by human modifications. Large numbers of users can be expected. Sights and sounds of others dominate, while management controls are numerous. Activities are facility/vehicle-dependent and include concerts, wave pools, amusement parks, zoos, vehicle racing facilities, spectator sports, and indoor games. The experience provides for numerous modern conveniences, large numbers of people, interaction with an exotic and manicured environment, and a feeling of high personal security.

Management Objectives for ROS Classes

Objectives for a specific class contain minimum guidelines and standards as well as directions concerning the type of activities, physical and social settings, and recreational opportunities to be managed for.

Primitive

The primitive class is managed to be essentially free from evidence of humans and on-site controls. Motor vehicle use within the area is not permitted. The area is managed to maintain an extremely high probability of experiencing isolation from others (not more than three to six encounters per day) and little to no managerial contact. Independence, closeness to nature, self-reliance, and an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk characterize this class. Back country use and management of renewable resources is subject to the protection of back country recreational values.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

Semi-primitive non-motorized areas are managed to be largely free from the evidence of humans and on-site controls. Motor vehicle use is not permitted (except as authorized). Facilities for the administration of livestock and for visitor use are allowed but limited. Project designs stress the protection of natural values and maintenance of the predominantly natural environment. Areas are managed to maintain a good probability of experiencing minimum contact with others, self-reliance through the application of back country skills, and an environment that offers a high degree of risk and challenge.

Back country use and management of renewable resources are dependent on maintaining naturally occurring ecosystems. The consumption of renewable resources is subject to the protection of back country recreational values.

Semi-Primitive Motorized

These areas are managed to provide a natural-appearing environment. Evidence of humans and management controls are present but subtle.

Motor vehicle use is allowed, but the concentration of users should be low. On-site interpretive facilities, low-standard roads and trails, trailheads, and signs should stress the natural environment and be the minimum necessary to achieve objectives.

The consumption of natural resources is allowed. Effort is taken to reduce the impact of utility corridors, rights-of-way, and other surface-disturbing

projects on the natural environment. Frequency of managerial contact with visitors is low to moderate.

Roaded Natural

Roaded natural areas are managed to provide a natural-appearing environment with moderate evidence of humans. Motor vehicle use is permitted and facilities for this use are provided. Concentration of users is moderate with evidence of others prevalent. Resource modification and use practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment.

Placement of rights-of-way, utility corridors, management facilities, and other surface-disturbing activities would be favored here over placement in semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized areas. The consumption of natural resources is allowed except at developed trailheads, developed recreational areas and sites, and where geological, cultural, or natural interests prevail. Frequency of managerial contact with visitors is moderate.

Rural

Rural areas are managed to provide a setting that is substantially modified with moderate to high evidence of civilization. Motor vehicle use is permitted. Concentration of users is often high with substantial evidence of others. Resource modification and use practices are mostly dominant in a somewhat manicured environment. Standards for road, highway, and facility development are high for user convenience. Frequency of managerial contact with visitors is moderate to high.

Urban

Urban areas are managed to provide a setting that is largely modified. Large numbers of users can be expected, and vegetation cover is often exotic and manicured. Facilities for highly intensified motor vehicle use and parking are available, with mass transit often included to carry people throughout the site. The probability for encountering other individuals and groups is prevalent, as is the convenience of recreational opportunities. Experiencing natural environments and their challenges and risks is relatively unimportant. Opportunities for competitive and spectator sports are common.